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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 008990

SIPDIS

NSC STAFF FOR SINGH

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [ASEC](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: EGYPT: THIRD ROUND OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS  
MARRED BY VIOLENCE AND BLOCKADES OF POLL ACCESS

REF: CAIRO 8786 AND PREVIOUS

Classified by DCM Stuart Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

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Summary  
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1. (C) Egypt's third and final round of parliamentary elections got underway on December 1 amid reports of hundreds of arrests of Muslim Brotherhood (MB) supporters. Polling stations in the areas visited by Emboffs tended either to be calm amid very light turnout, or cordoned off by security police who allowed inconsistent access by voters, particularly those who appeared to support the MB. There were multiple confirmed reports of clashes of rival supporters as well use by the security forces of tear gas and rubber bullets. One supporter of the small Karama Party appears to have been killed in Kafr El-Sheikh. Results will likely begin to trickle out on Dec. 2, but as with the first two rounds, we expect many of the races to go to run-offs, which are scheduled for Wednesday, December 7. End summary.

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What's in Play  
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2. (C) Round three of the parliamentary elections included the Delta governorates of Kafr El-Shaikh, Daqahiliya, Damietta, and Sharqiya; the Upper Egypt governorate of Sohag; the Red Sea Governorate; and North and South Sinai. Emboffs visited all of the Delta governorates on December 1, since they are home to the most races, voters, and MB challenges to the ruling NDP. Nearly 2000 independent domestic monitors associated with the three major monitoring coalitions were also in the field. Finally, about 18 NDI surveyors assessed the third round races.

3. (C) The December 1 contests featured approximately 1700 candidates running for 136 seats in 68 separate constituencies. The ruling NDP fielded one candidate in each of the races. MB candidates, nominally running as independents, challenged in 49 of the races. Registered opposition parties, including the Wafd, Tagamua, Karama, and Nasserist parties fielded a smattering of candidates. The remaining 1500 or so candidates comprised a motley collection of various NDP dissidents (i.e., local heavyweights who did not secure the party's nomination but decided to run anyway--and who will likely rejoin the Party if they win) and a much larger number of unknowns.

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Key Trends on December 1  
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4. (C) Access: Many polling stations visited by Emboffs in the Delta on December 1 appeared open and calm amid light security and a light turnout, albeit with a corresponding NDP presence. Most rural polling stations were calm. Other stations in urban areas where MB candidates were running, however, were under tight control of the security forces, which formed cordons around the stations.

--In Zagazig, capital of Sharqiya, turn out at mid-day was very light at the polling stations we visited. At several stations, young male supporters of NDP candidate Mahmoud Khamis were gathered outside the gates, dining on lunches provided by the candidate. The supporters, who were all wielding sticks, told Emboff that they did not expect any MB voters to visit their polling stations.

--Also in Zagazig, Emboffs made several visits at different points over the course of the afternoon to the station at the Nassiriya Elementary School, which had been cordoned off at mid-day after a scuffle inside. (Incumbent MB Independent Mohammad Morsy, who has been a GOE critic in parliament for the past five years, was one of the candidates on the ballot at the Nassiriya station.) Dozens of uniformed riot police formed a cordon around the station. Inside the cordon, another thirty or so plainclothes officers brandishing clubs and radios waited in reserve. Some voters presenting valid ID cards were being allowed through the cordon, but others were turned away. One bearded man, yelling "God is Great,"

was ejected from the polling station while emboff watched.

--Emboff in Damietta reported that polling stations in areas considered NDP strongholds appeared to be opening and functioning. Stations in MB areas, however, were only inconsistently open by mid-day. NDP activists in Damietta were issuing chits to NDP voters which appeared to allow these voters to cross the police lines at a number of stations in Damietta.

--Emboff in Daqahiliya noted also that police cordons around many urban polling stations appeared in some cases to be enabling access by NDP voters and discouraging MB participation.

15. (C) Violence: There were numerous scattered reports of violence over the course of the day. Most seriously, as of 1800 local time, it appears that at least one supporter of the Neo-Nasserist Karama (Dignity) Party was killed during a clash with security forces in Kafr El-Sheikh. Unconfirmed reports also suggested that Hamdeen Sabahi, a Karama leader/candidate had also been hospitalized with injuries suffered in the melee. In addition, we are aware of the following other incidents:

--In Mansura, capital of Daqahiliya, a New York Times staff photographer (protect), reported that he was chased away from a closed polling station by unidentified thugs bearing machetes.

--In Kafr El-Sheikh, police briefly detained a reporter for Al-Jazeera, and released him after smashing his camera.

--At various polling stations around Daqahiliya, emboff observed multiple clashes and high tensions between supporters of various candidates as well as police clashes with and arrests of MB supporters.

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Domestic Observers Dismayed  
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16. (SBU) Key domestic monitoring groups funded jointly by USAID and MEPI both issued press releases sharply critical of the day's events. The Independent Coalition for Elections Monitoring (ICEM) said that the arrests of more than 600 opposition supporters (mostly MB) in the 48 hours prior to December 1 "adversely affects the credibility of government actions." ICEM also noted that several of its observers had been warned by unknown persons not to pursue their monitoring work. ICEM also noted the following:

--an up-tick in denial of access by ICEM observers to polling stations by GOE officials.

--three separate beatings of ICEM observers in Kafr El-Sheikh and Sohag, two by security forces and one by NDP activists.

--arrests of MB "poll watchers" in Kafr El-Sheikh and Sohag.

--multiple reports of "disenfranchisement of opposition voters" due to cordons and other denial of access by the security forces.

17. (SBU) The Egyptian Association for Supporting Democracy (EASD) issued similar critical findings, condemning "the increasing security interventions that have led to the closing of polling stations, violence, and the ultimate exclusion of civil society monitors, candidate agents, and citizens from the voting process."

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Comment  
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18. (C) The defining characteristic of round three so far appears to be an increase in security force cordons outside polling stations, which in turn appear to have limited access to the polls by non-NDP voters. The ultimate effects of these tactics will only be clear once the results are announced, but the opposition and domestic monitors are already crying foul. End comment.

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